

Application No.: 09/271,503

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REMARKS

Claims 1-19 are pending. Claims 13-15 are allowed.

Claims 1-7, 8, 12, 16 and 18 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Tanaka, U.S. Patent No. 4,658,299. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants previously submitted that Tanaka fails to teach that function blocks are connectable to each other. In response, the Examiner states that this is clearly taught at col. 3, lines 33-35. Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner is mistaken.

Tanaka actually teaches a control unit 1 (see Fig. 2) which is connectable to various output devices such as a digital copier, a printer, an image file, etc. The control unit is connected to these output devices through the switching device. However, as clearly illustrated in Fig. 2, there is no possibility of connecting the various output devices *to each other*. The disclosure at col. 3, lines 33-35, merely illustrates that the input stations are connected to the output stations through the switch, or referring to the drawing, the block above the switch is connected to one of the blocks below the switch. However, none of the blocks below the switch can be connected to another block below the switch. Thus, not all of the function blocks disclosed in Fig. 2 are connectable to each other. Claim 1 recites "a plurality of function blocks connectable to each other." Clearly Tanaka does not teach or suggest this feature since not all function blocks can be connected to each other.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue.

In the event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, Applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorize the Commissioner to charge the cost of such

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petitions and/or fees due in connection with this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952
referencing docket no. (325772008700.)

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Respectfully submitted,

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